Know the Earth…Show the Way

Preparing for the Challenge

"Successful Risk-Taking"

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Leadership Challenge Perspectives

In NGA, we are committed to. . .

Customers. . .both as a National Intelligence and a Combat Support Agency.

People. . .their personal integrity, professionalism, growth, leadership, and accountability.

Culture. . .our diversity, teamwork, creativity, ***risk-taking****, and mutual trust and respect.*

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Leadership Challenge Perspectives

“There is risk-taking and there is prudent risk-taking. One is encouraged and the other is sloppy. A competent leader must know the difference.”

Lt Gen James Clapper, Jr. (Ret)

Director, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency

Risk-Taking

Webster's Dictionary Definition:

1) To expose to a chance of loss or danger

2) Exposure to possible harm, loss, or injury

What Constitutes Risk?

- Circumventing prescribed methods or procedures
- Neglecting paperwork when other things are more important
- Bending a rule
- Making a commitment without authority to do so
- Being willing to signal trouble up the line
- Challenging the party line
- Encouraging an employee who thinks there is a “better way” to try it
- Recognizing you sometimes have to rewrite the book

What should not be put at risk?

- Safety
- Quality
- Commitments
  - Should be handled with integrity and honored
- Equilibrium of an operating system
  - Changes which cause discontinuities in other areas

Transitional Period

Earlier Paradigm

1) Focusing on numbers and tasks
2) Confronting and Combating
3) Stressing independence
4) Encouraging "old boy networks
5) Changing by necessity and crisis
6) Being internally competitive
7) Having a narrow focus: "Me and my organization"

Future Paradigm

1) Focusing on quality, service, and the customer
2) Collaborating and Unifying
3) Fostering interdependence
4) Respecting, honoring, and leveraging diversity
5) Continuously learning and innovating
6) Being globally competitive
7) Having a broader focus: "My community, my society, my world"

Hierarchy of Risk Sponsorship

- Stage 0—Status quo works; risk aversion is predominant, risk taking is discouraged. Conformance is rewarded.
- Stage 1—System needs fine-tuning. The rules of the game don't change, but some individuals with initiative "bootleg" change despite feeling at risk.
- Stage 2—Higher management recognizes the need for change and encourages limited risk-taking. Risk is tolerated.
- Stage 3—Those at the top recognizes the need for a quantum leap driving a change to the operating system. Risk is encouraged!
- Stage 4—Permanence of ambiguity, uncertainty and change registers; management systems are altered to support and sustain risk. RISK IS REWARDED.

Risk Taking and Our Agency

I. Where is NGA on the Hierarchy of Risk Sponsorship?

II. Why?

III. What will it take to move NGA to Stage 4, if it is not already there?

Successful Businesses' Dozen Truths: TP's 30-Year Perspective

9. Willingness to Lead the Customer. . .and **Take the Heat Associated** Therewith (Mantra: Satan Invented Focus Groups to Derail True Believers)
10. **"Reward Excellent Failures. Punish Mediocre Successes."**
11. **Courage to Stand Alone** on One's Record of Accomplishment Against All the Forces of Conventional Wisdom.

Leadership Challenge Perspectives

Abraham Lincoln on Risk Taking

When Lincoln was asked by a New Yorker when he was going to emancipate the slaves, the president politely responded with this story:

"Well, you see, we've got to be very cautious how we manage the Negro question. If we're not we shall be like the barber out in Illinois who was shaving a fellow with a hatchet face and lantern jaw like mine. The barber stuck his finger into his customer's mouth to make his cheek stick out, but while shaving away he cut through the fellow's cheek and cut off his own finger. If we are not very careful we shall do as the barber did."

Taken from Lincoln Stories for Leaders by Donald T. Phillips.